Fortas Plans New Law Firm

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By Robert F. Levy
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Abe Fortas will soon return to the practice of law in Washington.

The former Supreme Court justice, who stepped down voluntarily last year amid charges of financial impropriety, will open his own "small, small" firm in Canal Square, a new complex of shops and offices on the banks of the C&O Canal in Georgetown.

"I'll be open for business as soon as I can get hold of the partitions," Fortas explained in a telephone interview yesterday. "I hope I can get them installed in my lifetime."

The firm and its chief partner will "enjoy life, do some good and have some fun," he said.

Howard R. Koven, senior partner in a Chicago firm, is expected to join Fortas here "as soon as he passes the D.C. bar," Fortas said. Koven has been co-counsel to Fortas in legal work the former justice has done over the past six months.

Fortas left the firm he helped found—Arnold and Porter—at the same time he left the Supreme Court. The parting was reportedly "amicable" and "by mutual agreement."

Fortas said yesetrday that his wife, the former Carolyn Agger, would continue to practice with Arnold and Porter.

"She's a very independent lawyer and has always had her own career," Fortas said.

Fortas' firm is so far nameless and clientless. Asked what sort of law it would specialize in, Fortas replied:

"I don't know. What do you suggest?"